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Thomas P. Gaffey, Co-Chair
Andrew M. Fleishmann, Co-Chair
Education Committee
Room 3100, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, Ct 06106

RE: Raised Bill #6666, Section 7

An act requiring School Districts to utilize Board Certified Behavior Analysts when and individual education plan includes Applied Behavior Analytic services as part of a child with autism's special education

As both a parent of a child with autism and the employee of a school that provides ABA services to students with autism, I support Raised Bill #6666, Section 7 and I urge you to pass this bill during this legislative session.

My son was born in 1989 at a time when autism was an obscure and virtually unknown disorder. There were fortunately, professionals and scientists that were familiar with autism, and had been working for years to apply their scientific method to teaching children and adults with autism. That science was the science of ABA – Applied Behavior Analysis. Unfortunately there were very few trained and qualified Behavior Analysts in existence in those days. Even more unfortunate was the plethora of self-proclaimed Behavior Analysts, who preyed on unsuspecting parents like us, by representing themselves as people who could cure autism. While it was true, and proven scientifically, that properly administered ABA programs had a positive effect on improving the social, behavioral and academic performance of children with autism, there was little guidance for a parent in selecting a provider that actually had the skills necessary to apply the science correctly and successfully.

This is why I support this bill. For the parents of autistic children, as well as school administrators who are charged with providing the ABA services required in a child's Instructional Education Program (IEP) it is crucial that they have the tools to help them select qualified people to make their programs successful.

Our family has been impacted immensely by our son's autism. We changed our home address and our school district, to find a school that provided ABA services. Unfortunately after the effort and expense of making the move, we discovered that the "ABA professional" provided by our new school, did not in fact have the training and

skills to teach our son, who in fact regressed after moving into this new program due to the staff's inability to apply ABA to our son's behavior. Our well mannered son, who had made great progress in our home, became unruly, bouncing off the walls, screaming, and self injurious and frustrated little boy.

Fortunately, we had the personal resources to locate and hire a bona fide Certified Behavior Analyst to direct his program, and to supervise the one-on-one educator for his program. Our son's behavior improved quickly and dramatically in the right direction.

Since that time our son, although severely handicapped by his disorder, has returned to being the calm, likeable, and cooperative young man he was before poor programming by an unqualified pretender almost lost our precious son. The persistent application of the principles of ABA has brought our son to a point where he can live successfully in a supported environment.

As a co-founder of a school that provides education to autistic children, I've had the advantage of seeing the tremendous progress for so many children that are taught, or whose programs are supervised by a Certified Behavior Analyst.

I have also had the unfortunate experience of seeing my son nearly destroyed by the programs run by a special education teacher who attended a few workshops but didn't know how little she really knew and who did not have the expertise to adequately educate these very needy children.

I must also say that I am dismayed, and angered, by the amount of money that is spent and wasted, by desperate parents, and well meaning school administrators, on people who claim to be Behavior Analysts that do not in fact have the skills, and who we feel are stealing from the people of this state.

Thank you for listening to my comments in support of this bill.

Sincerely,

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